

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 21, 2006

The Honorable Ralph Regula
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services and Education
Committee on Appropriations
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0001

The Honorable David Obey
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services and Education
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0001

Dear Chairman Regula and Ranking Member Obey,

We request your consideration for the inclusion of \$125 million in the FY2007 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill for the Department of Education to move forward with the school dropout prevention provisions in the No Child Left Behind Act (PL 107-110). Unfortunately, the President's budget for FY 2007 eliminated funding for the important school dropout prevention programs.

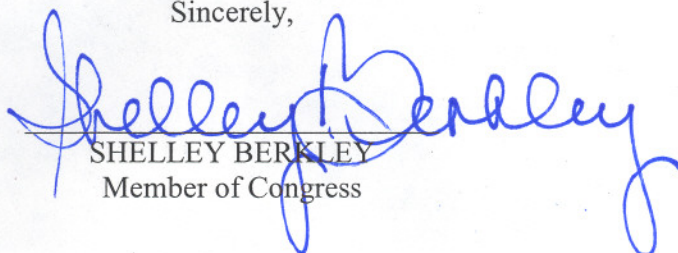
Schools across the country are struggling with our nation's escalating student dropout problem. Lowering the student dropout rate is one of the most significant challenges facing educators today. Students who fail to earn a high school diploma face more obstacles than students who complete high school. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, dropouts are 50 percent more likely to be unemployed than high school graduates. A recent report from the U.S. Census Bureau shows that the average income for full-time workers with a high school degree is approximately 30 percent higher than for a person without a high school degree. In addition, high school dropouts are about three times as likely to slip into poverty from one year to the next when compared to those who have finished high school.

Congress has an obligation to give local school districts the resources needed to create programs that dissuade students from dropping out of school and encourage those who have done so to return to the classroom. The No Child Left Behind Act outlines a two-pronged approach to dropout prevention and re-entry in schools. Subpart 1 provides for the creation of a coordinated national strategy by the Secretary of Education. Subpart 2 creates a National School Dropout Prevention Initiative to give grant assistance to states to establish dropout prevention programs.

While we understand that we are facing a time of budget constraints and an increasing budget deficit, it is not a time to abandon our students who need us the most. We must give our young people every chance to become successful and productive adults. We urge you to include the funding for these programs that Members supported when they voted to pass the No Child Left Behind Act.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



SHELLEY BERKLEY
Member of Congress

OK Butterfund

Charles G. Joz

Pete Stark

Zee Loff

Nike McIntyre

Major R. Owens

Lijah E. Cummings

Patricia Fung

Julia Carson

Jim McDermott

Liane E. Watson

John Lewis

Solomon P. Ortiz

Ruben Hinojosa

Corinne Brown

John Longenecker

Donald Payne

~~Wanda L. Adams~~

Hilda L. Solis

Bob Elliott

Billy McCollum

Linda J. Sanchez

Signatories on FY07 Dropout Prevention Letter:

Rep. Shelley Berkley
Rep. Corrine Brown
Rep. G.K. Butterfield
Rep. Julia Carson
Rep. John Conyers Jr.
Rep. Elijah Cummings
Rep. Peter DeFazio
Rep. Bob Etheridge
Rep. Charles Gonzalez
Rep. Ruben Hinojosa
Rep. John Lewis
Rep. Zoe Lofgren
Rep. Betty McCollum
Rep. Jim McDermott
Rep. Mike McIntyre
Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton
Rep. Solomon Ortiz
Rep. Major Owens
Rep. Donald Payne
Rep. Linda Sanchez
Rep. Hilda Solis
Rep. Pete Stark
Rep. Diane Watson